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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 9, 2007

USEPA Awards NJMC for Clean Air Excellence

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission today was recognized by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for a comprehensive set of policies and regulations aimed at improving air quality in the 14-town Meadowlands District.

“A combination of bold strides in environmental policymaking and regional concern for environmental health has made the Meadowlands District a model for communities looking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve renewable energy opportunities,” said NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin, also Commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. “Through cooperation with state, county, and municipal governments, schools and private businesses, we have ushered in a new era for the Meadowlands.”

The NJMC announced a commitment in July 2006 to the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions seven percent below levels recorded in 1990 by the year 2012. By the end of the year, all 14 Meadowlands municipalities joined the agency in this effort .

Since 2004, NJMC policymaking has correlated with a new Master Plan that emphasizes a reduction of sprawl, brownfield redevelopment, location of housing near public transportation, and permanent preservation of 8,400 acres of wetlands and open space.

The NJMC has established a task force to draft a Renewable Energy Master Plan that will include a carbon footprint of energy uses in the region, measure energy efficiency, and recommendations for the production of 20 Megawatts of solar, geothermal, tidal and other renewable energies by the year 2020. The NJMC recently began moving forward on a startup solar grid on its own buildings, parking structures and the sides of landfills.

The NJMC is midway through an air quality study in cooperation with the Environmental and Occupational Health Services Institute at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Rutgers University. The study has shown that mobile sources are the greatest factor affecting regional air quality, which has led the agency to convert its vehicle fleet into fuel-efficient hybrids, to appropriate funds to develop a car-sharing program for commuters, and to purchase carbon dioxide monitors.

The new Meadowlands Science Center and Observatory, a 10,000 square foot expansion of the Meadowlands Environment Center, will be built to a LEED Gold standard. The NJMC has also commissioned Rutgers to provide quantitative data on the life cycle and environmental impacts of green buildings, and has made a Green Building Guide available to all new development applicants in the Meadowlands District.

“One should never underestimate the power of American innovation. These original ideas and cutting-edge projects embody our nation’s unwavering commitment to cleaner, healthier air,” said USEPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. “Your achievements are an inspiration to others and portray our country’s dedication to excellence. Thank you.”

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